Programs and Services

## Farm and Food Report, Week of April 10, 2006

Johne's Disease Prevention Initiative A Welcome Development | Agricultural Industry Marketers Host Korean Journalists | Saskatchewan Producers Sign Up For CASS Program | Pound-Maker Investments Launches Share Trading Program | Canaryseed: Not Just Chicken Feed Any More

**Week of April 10, 2006**

### JOHNE'S DISEASE PREVENTION INITIATIVE A WELCOME DEVELOPMENT

Saskatchewan dairy producers are eligible for $400 in funding assistance as part of a Johne's Disease prevention initiative, according to Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food Surveillance Veterinarian Dr. LeeAnn Forsythe. The initiative is being supported by CanWest DHI, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) through the Agricultural Adaptation Council's CanAdvance Program, provincial agriculture ministeries and dairy farmer organizations from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta, the Western College of Veterinary Medicine and the Westgen Endowment Fund.

Johne's Disease (JD) is caused by the bacterium Mycobacterium avium subspecies paratuberculosis, a distant relative of the bacteria that causes tuberculosis. The disease is a contagious, chronic, progressive bacterial infection that causes thickening of the gastrointestinal tract, thus restricting absorption of nutrients. The clinical signs of an animal infected with JD are chronic diarrhea and weight loss. The average incubation period is five years, but can range from two to 10 years. The main tests for JD have been fecal culture and a blood test for antibodies.

On Ontario dairy farms, research suggests that 15 to 30 per cent of herds contain animals infected with JD. A serological survey of dairy farms in Saskatchewan in 2001 found that 43 per cent of herds had at least one animal infected with JD, and 24 per cent had two or more.

In May 2005, the Milk ELISA test for JD became available for use by Ontario dairy producers through CanWest DHI. This test was validated by Dr. Steve Hendrick, who was at the Ontario Veterinary College at the time, but who is now located at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan. This test allows milk to be tested for JD during the normal collection of milk samples, making it very convenient for evaluating the presence of JD in a herd.

CanWest DHI is located in Ontario, and they collect and test milk samples for dairy farmers participating in the Dairy Herd Improvement (DHI) program. CanWest DHI has received funding from the Agricultural Adaptation Council's CanAdvance program to train veterinarians in Western Canada.

In Saskatchewan, the veterinarians are trained by Dr. Hendrick to conduct on-farm JD risk assessment tests and to counsel producers on the best management practices to reduce the risk of JD. Calves are most susceptible to infection, so the risk assessment emphasizes keeping the calving area free of manure.

In Saskatchewan, there is funding in place to train up to 18 veterinarians and to complete risk assessments on up to 40 dairy farms.

CanWest DHI charges DHI-participating producers $9 per Milk ELISA test, plus a $50 handling fee, and non-participating producers $10 per test, plus a $75 handling fee. Producers will receive a $400 credit against their DHI account when the DHI veterinarian submits a herd report to the provincial DHI co-ordinator.

For more information, contact:

Dr. LeeAnn Forsythe
Surveillance Veterinarian
Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food
(306) 787-6069

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**AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY MARKETERS HOST KOREAN JOURNALISTS**

Why would the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership (STEP) and Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (SAF) host a delegation of foreign journalists?

The answer soon becomes clear when we find out who the guests are.

Some of the province's most recent visitors represented publications with readerships ranging from 30,000 to over 900,000 people.

In January, Saskatchewan's agriculture sector hosted a pair of Japanese food writers. This time, it was the Koreans' turn to be brought to Canada by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and the Canadian Embassy in Seoul.

The group—consisting of Yim Ho-Yeoun of The Eating-Out Management Magazine for Restaurant Owners, Kim Dong-Youn of The Korean Economic Daily, Kim Yong-Deok of The Monthly Food Industry and Kim Sei-Dong of Munhwa Ilbo (Evening Daily Newspaper)—was accompanied by Jong-Hoon Kim, Trade Commissioner at the Canadian Embassy in Seoul and Jake Thomas, an International Market Development Officer with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. They traveled across Western Canada seeking information on beef, canola, functional foods, food preparation and food safety.

During their one-day stop in Saskatchewan, STEP and SAF organized a program that showcased Saskatchewan companies and their products. The delegation began their program with a tour of CanMar Grain Products, where they sampled the company's golden roasted flax seed. They also met with Chef Rob Fuller, the owner of Zest Restaurant in Regina, to learn about various food preparation techniques, and they were subsequently treated to a luncheon of Saskatchewan's finest cuisine—locally produced, of course.

SAF hosted the luncheon at Zest Restaurant for the visiting delegation and the Saskatchewan producers who supplied products for the meal.

Chef Fuller created a variety of unique dishes featuring golden roasted flax from CanMar Grain Products (http://www.roastedlfax.com/), organic beef and pearl barley from Poplar Valley Organics (http://www.cluborganic.ca/), lentils from Diefenbaker Seed Processors Ltd. (http://www.dspdirect.ca/), bison from Canadian Prairie Bison, saskatoon berries from Prairie Berries (http://www.prairieberries.com/) and Riverbend Plantation (http://www.riverbendplantation.ca/), canola oil from Canola Info (http://www.canolainfo.org/), sour cherries from Over the Hill Orchards (http://www.overthehillorchards.ca/), and wild rice from Points North Wild Rice Company (http://www.pointsnorthwildrice.com/).

During the afternoon, the visiting journalists met with Saskatchewan suppliers and listened to presentations by SAF and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) on food safety and Canada's food inspection/regulatory system.

This event was another example of how STEP, SAF, AAFC and the Canadian diplomatic corps work together to create an exceptional opportunity to showcase Saskatchewan companies and their products to potential international buyers.

For more information, contact:

Christall Beaudry
Membership and Communications Specialist
Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership
(306) 787-7919

Joan McConnell
Marketing Co-ordinator
Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food
(306) 787-6154

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**SASKATCHEWAN PRODUCERS SIGN UP FOR CASS PROGRAM**

Farmers and ranchers who want to learn how to farm and ranch more successfully—or who want to learn a new trade that can provide off-farm income—can turn to the Canadian Agricultural Skills Service (CASS) for assistance.

CASS supports training to enhance or develop the skills and knowledge necessary to improve farm production or management practices, gain off-farm employment, or create or expand a business venture.

Those already participating in CASS appreciate the help it provided, and are confident that their new skills will lead to a more profitable future, either on farm or off - people like Mylo Chubb of Assiniboia:

"The CASS program gave me an opportunity to look into other fields of work," he says. "I'm a rancher. We are 100 per cent livestock. We have a cow-calf operation, along with yearlings, and we also custom graze. All our land was seeded back to grass in 1988 to 1990. We have approximately 3,500 acres. I used the program money to train for the oil patch. I am basically diversifying toward the oil and gas sector, with the anticipation that it is really going to open up here in south-western Saskatchewan."

What are the expected results of the program?

This program will help increase the income and profitability of farmers through learning activities that have been validated through a skills and needs assessment process and the development of an Individual Learning Plan (ILP).

Assistance is provided to access training in areas such as improved farm practices, business management, accounting, finance, human resource management; training for other employment, or training to acquire skills to start a new business.

Dawn Anhorn and her family farm north of Hafford. "With the help of CASS, I am taking an office administration course at the Academy of Learning in North Battleford," she explains. "This will help me get off-farm income to help with our farming. I think it is great that they are helping people who normally would not be able to afford to do anything like this."

Anhorn will finish her training in July, and then her husband will start a heavy equipment operation course, also with CASS assistance.

"To other people considering taking advantage of CASS, I would say 'Go for it!' It paid for my tuition. It is helping to pay for mileage. This will help us make ends meet. Times are tough. We have a beef cow-calf operation. This will be a way to supplement our income."

Farmers and their spouses with a net family income of $45,000 or less are eligible to apply for CASS. Beginning farmers are also eligible for some services, regardless of income.

To find out more about CASS, call the toll-free number 1-888-887-7977. Program application forms can be down-loaded from the SAF website at:

http://www.agr.gov.sk.ca/docs/about_us/apf/cass_factsheet2005.asp

For more information, contact:

Gerry Holland
Business Planning Specialist
Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food
(306) 787-4051

Adrienne Jensen
Acting Provincial CASS Co-ordinator
Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food
(306) 933-6016

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**POUND-MAKER INVESTMENTS LAUNCHES SHARE TRADING PROGRAM**

If you own shares that you would like to sell, or if you would like to acquire shares in Pound-Maker Investments Ltd. (PMI) of Lanigan, the company just made it a whole lot easier to do so.

Pound-Maker recently launched a web-based program in which any existing shareholder or member of the public may enroll as a "Participant" in the Share Trading Program, and then submit offers to sell or buy existing shares of the company.

Sheri Pederson looks after the program at PMI.

"We needed an easier way for people to let others know that they have shares for sale," she explains. "Our company has grown and been around for over 35 years now, and some of our shareholders are not in the farming business anymore. We needed a way for them to liquidate their shares and to let the public know that there are shares available to purchase."

PMI will post summaries of all offers that are received through its website—including the number of shares that the participant is offering to buy or sell, the bid or asking price for the shares, the date the offer was made and the expiry date of the offer. PMI will then attempt to match as many buy offers with as many sell offers as possible at monthly "Trading Sessions" that will be held on the third Friday of each month.

"Our lawyer has a lot of influence in it because of his background," explains Pederson. "It all had to be passed by the Saskatchewan Securities Commission before we could even attempt to go with it. Whether you are an existing shareholder or an individual interested in purchasing shares, you must enroll by printing the enrollment form that is on the share trading website and filling it out.

"On that enrollment form, there are a number of options. If you are a company, you fill in the incorporation date. If you are an owner of shares already, you must list the shares that you have, so we can ensure that one entity is not purchasing more than a certain percentage of the shares in the company. Once you are enrolled, I would send you back a PIN number and, from that point on, you can actually submit your buy or sell forms online.

"It is not like an auction where, if something matches, it falls off right away. The offer remains posted until the session closes and then, if there is a match, the shares are sold. If you went to our current trade share information right now, you would see the current share offerings. You also have the option of making a change offer if you so wish. If two offers are the same, the first one in gets it."

Peterson says there are only a few people registered in the system as of yet, but she expects interest in the program will increase once word gets out.

Full details of the Share Trading Program are available at: http://www.pound-maker.ca/sharetrading.htm

Pound-Maker was originally established under the name Pound-Maker Feeders Ltd. in 1970, when about 50 local area farmers joined together to build a 2,500-head cattle feedlot to create an alternative market for their grain. By the mid-'80s, it had expanded to 8,500 head, and expanded dramatically once again in 1991 when the company increased capacity by 10,000 head and built a 10-million-litre-per-year ethanol plant.

Pound-Maker Feeders was then renamed Pound-Maker Investments Ltd. and reorganized as a holding company for local investors/shareholders, with the integrated feedlot and ethanol plant spun off into a new subsidiary operating company, Pound-Maker Agventures Ltd. (PMA).

For more information, contact:

Sheri Pederson
(306) 365-4281
sheri@pound-maker.ca
http://www.pound-maker.ca/sharetrading.htm

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**CANARYSEED: NOT JUST BIRD FEED ANY MORE?**

Researchers at the University of Saskatchewan are making significant strides in the development of canario, a type of canaryseed that may have potential human applications, according to Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (SAF) Special Crops Specialist Ray McVicar.

"Canario is the market trade name that the industry has developed for those canaryseed varieties that are smooth and hairless, or glabrous. It does not have the small hair on the seed that causes the dust to be very itchy and irritating on your skin."

Canada is the largest producer and exporter of canaryseed in the world, and Saskatchewan is home to 95 per cent of that production.

Through an Agriculture Development Fund (ADF # 20010108) project, the Crop Development Centre at the University of Saskatchewan, under the direction of Dr. Pierre Hucl, has successfully developed canario varieties that are not as irritating to the skin, and also produce better yields.

"Dr. Hucl's program has developed a number of hairless varieties. This makes the crop much easier to work with, and reduces the risks of throat, breathing and more serious health problems," says McVicar.

Canario yields have been lower than regular canaryseed, until now.

"When the first variety of canario was released—CDC Maria—it was typically lower yielding than the other two varieties that have been grown for many years," says McVicar. "It also had higher bushel weight because, without the hair, it packed down more. Dr. Hucl has released varieties that are equal in yield to the old standard, itchy type of canaryseed."

McVicar explains that all canaryseed is currently used for the bird food market only. No human consumption is allowed and, in order to start to look at the human consumption market, one would have to have the hairless type.

This is where canario shows promise. The recently approved canaryseed check-off, sanctioned by the provincial government through the creation of the Canaryseed Development Commission of Saskatchewan, will now make it possible to explore potential new markets for canaryseed, concludes McVicar.

"The commission will be looking closely at potential new uses for canario when it undertakes its strategic planning session in the next few weeks."

For more information, contact:

Ray McVicar
Special Crops Provincial Specialist
Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food
(306) 787-4665


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